

# Q & A:

## Many voters ask, officials answer

Here some of the questions asked and answered at the Farmington Public Schools' millage renewal information meeting Tuesday at the board office.

Answering questions were Superintendent Michael Flanagan and assistant superintendent for finance Bruce Barrett, as well as school board members.

**Is the money going to stay in Farmington, or is it going to go to other districts via the Robin Hood effect?**

Barrett: "We've been reading about the Robin Hood approach especially the one about tax based sharing, which a portion of the growth of our assessed evaluation is diverted to other school districts in the state of Michigan. That program came on the scene

last fiscal year and was immediately challenged in court. So, for this year, the money lost by our school district has been escrowed and basically that program is on hold.

"One positive aspect of that is it deals with new growth in our tax evaluation base so that something we can look to in the future. It doesn't take away from (the money) we have right now."

**How can you ask for a millage renewal that is going to expire in 1994 when we cannot foresee what our financial situation will be in 1994?**

Flanagan: "Our three-year plan for children learning in this district is based on trying to make sure we can lock into a reasonable picture for the next few years. It's common in every other district we're aware of by the way. We're the odd district at trying to be more like them. Primarily, it's trying to tie in our three-year funding with our three-year goals."

**If the Feb. 2 millage passes, does the school board promise no further tax proposals for 1993 through 1995?**

Flanagan: "The governor has some proposals right now that are totally separate from local millages. Without knowing or having a crystal ball as to what that is I think we'd be less than honest to say we wouldn't look for possible millage election proposals sometime in the future. But I can say as superintendent of school our intent is, as long as everything stays the way it is at the state level, than certainly. That doesn't



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMIEUX

Giving answers: Farmington School officials, including Michael Flanagan (center right) and Bruce Barrett, answered questions from the public about the upcoming millage.

look like a likelihood. The bottom line is this... if the people don't support it, they vote it down."

**Did the courts rule this summer against state aid recapture? What happened to the \$8 million reserved in the budget for recapture?**

Barrett: "The court ruled recently that state aid recapture was not a proper activity for state government to get involved with... Some specific parts of that ruling were very bad news to us. In fact, we believe that it will result in significant losses in FICA (54% million from the state representing employer's FICA contributions) received from funding to our district very soon. (The \$8 million in the recapture budget?) "At this point, it's

very unclear what will happen as a result of this court ruling. At this minute, it's been remanded to a lower court which is dealing with details of how that is going to be refigured, and timing as to whether that will be effective this year or next year or when."

**What programs will be financed with the renewal funds?**

Barrett: "This renewal of the same millage rate would have to finance anything that is financed at this time. Ninety-three percent of operating costs are handled through our local millage."

**What happens if the millage is not renewed. What cuts would take place?**

Board member Cathy Webb: "The board, I do not believe, would not be looking at cuts. I

think if the millage is not renewed, as board we would come together and perhaps analyze why it was not renewed. But I assume we would decide to go back to the voters with it again... Legally we would have to wait 45 days to do that."

**How is the inflation rate determined (to calculate the Headlee Amendment)?**

Barrett: "Law calls for that the assessment to be determined by the state tax commission. (The commission uses the Consumer Price Index formula.)"

**What period of time is this renewal last?**

Barrett: "All three of the renewals instead of lasting 10 years would expire in the year 2001."



Answer, please: Bill Boger of Farmington Hills asks, "How long do you want the renewal to last?"



Calling in: Kathy Jones takes questions on the millage.

## Long-lost brother sought

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

He was adopted by a family in Farmington Hills. He had the name Michael Laverne. His birth date is April 3, 1958. He has red hair.

Otherwise, Pamela Bassett of Wauseon, Ohio, doesn't have much to go on in her search for a brother she has never seen. "Ever since I found out about it, there's something missing," said Bassett, who learned about her adopted brother eight years ago from her mother. "I wanted to find him. I'm big on family. I want to let him know we want to know him."

Bassett placed a personal ad as her first step. She knows the adoption took place in Detroit, but doesn't have the agency's name.

Her mother had a yearlong correspondence with the adoptive parents. That's where the trail ended. "She (her mom) doesn't know I'm doing this," Bassett said.

Bassett is optimistic. Her boyfriend's mother tracked down a daughter she had given up for adoption.

An adoption specialist with the Department of Social Services doesn't hold much hope, though.

"I think she's going to come up blank," said Henry Hofstra. "You can't go by a first and middle name."

Hofstra said the most common way to track down siblings is through court records or the agency which handled the adoption. A name is needed, though.

A spokeswoman from Catholic Social Services said it usually gets requests from birth parents and adult adoptees. Siblings' requests are less frequent but not uncommon.

Adoptees and birth parents can send a consent form with the Adoption Central Registry. The name and address of an adult adoptee may be released by an agency or probate court to a biological parent or sister, but only if the adoptee has authorized the release in writing.

In Bassett's case, the brother may not know he's adopted. Agencies encourage parents to tell children they were adopted. That wasn't the case 30 years ago.

A spokeswoman with the National Council for Adoption said such searches are a sensitive issue.

"The question comes down to respect," said Mary Beth Seader, who is the vice president of the Washington D.C.-based group. "Is your curiosity enough to po-

tentially disrupt someone's life?" Seader said a search by a birth parent or adoptee happens in only 2 to 5 percent of cases.

Some people hire private investigators; others use illegal means such as accessing confidential computer files.

Seader said using a newspaper ad at least allows the adoptee to seek out the person conducting the search. The best method is to register with a mutual consent listing, she added.

If there is contact, sometimes high expectations can turn anti-climatic.

"Sometimes they're having difficulty in their own life," Seader said "... they don't know their birth parent and they think this person holds on to all the answers."

Bassett just wants to meet her older brother. She has two sisters.

"We all know," said Bassett, who is a 1979 graduate of Plymouth Salem High School, "who all wanted to find him. We didn't know what to do. I'm 32. I couldn't wait any longer."

"I have three children and if they have an uncle I want them to know. I want to see the family whole."

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sions are the main concern. "We don't want anything that's going to overshadow the building," said Howard Legg, a board member. "So, we didn't want it to be too high. That's why we were concerned about the dimensions."

According to Downey, the Masonic board approves the concept but wants the height of the tower in writing. Members said they would like the clock face to be in line with the lower line of the building's mansard roof — approximately 22 feet. The total height would then be 28 feet.

Wzacy said anything is feasible. "It can be anything you want it to be," Wzacy said.

City Manager Frank Laubhoff said city ordinance requires the plan go before the historical commission for recommendations. Then it would go before the planning commission for approval.

Any concerns at this point would be premature, Laubhoff added.

"Until the DDA board says to the planner, 'Draw up a building plan for this,' it hasn't been completed."

The overall cost for the Downtown Clock Plaza is estimated at \$80,000. The DDA approved \$65,000 to go along with \$7,000 left over from the 125th anniversary celebration and \$14,000 raised through private contributions.

The purpose of the plaza would be to enhance the corner. Some aren't sure a clock is the answer.

Councilwoman JoAnne McShane points out there's already three clock towers downtown.

"If the community would like a clock tower, I'd certainly be willing to compromise on a smaller

clock tower keeping with the nature of the historic district," McShane said.

"I think the focal point is the building. Everything else should complement the building."

The building was constructed in 1876 and was jointly owned by Masons and Farmington Township until the early 1960s. Masons took sole ownership then.

### CLARIFICATION

A story on the Downtown Clock Plaza in the Jan. 14 edition of the Farmington Observer should have said the clock tower would have been 34 feet, 6 inches tall, according to the original design.